



PERSONAL NARRATIVES  
OF EVENTS IN THE  
WAR OF THE REBELLION,

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE  
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

---

SECOND SERIES—No. 15.

---

PROVIDENCE:  
N. BANGS WILLIAMS & COMPANY  
1882.

Copyright by  
N. BANGS WILLIAMS.

PROVIDENCE PRESS COMPANY, PRINTERS.

PRISON LIFE

OF

LIEUT. JAMES M. FALES,

BY

GEORGE N. BLISS,

LATE CAPTAIN FIRST RHODE ISLAND CAVALRY.



PROVIDENCE:

N. BANGS WILLIAMS & COMPANY.

1882.

Copyright by  
N. BANGS WILLIAMS.  
1882.

PRISON LIFE  
OF  
LIEUT. JAMES M. FALES.

[Read before the Society, October 12, 1881.]



AT Middleburg, Virginia, about dark on the evening of June 17, 1863, I was in command of Company F, First Rhode Island Cavalry. About three hours before, the regiment, numbering about three hundred men, had charged into Middleburg, driving the enemy out, and at this time a heavy force, two regiments, as stated by General Stuart in his official report, was advancing to attack us; our pickets had been forced back upon the reserve and a sharp combat was inevitable unless we retreated. Companies G and F were dismounted and formed in line behind a stone wall which bounded one side of the road.

By this time it was so dark that the enemy, being at some little distance, could not see us, and so they charged up the road in column of fours, and the first notice they had of our location was the discharge of about sixty carbines, when every man of our force had four rebels abreast of himself with the nearest enemy within six feet of the muzzle of his gun. The slaughter was fearful; horses and men went down in wild confusion, while our men, drawing their six-shooters, opened a deadly fire. The enemy retreated in great disorder, and we could hear their officers rallying them for another charge. A second time they charged, were met by the same destructive fire, again fell back, and then we heard their officers saying: "Now, boys, form once more; we'll give 'em h—l this time; we will sweep every Yankee from the face of the earth!" and again they charged, but only to meet the same deadly repulse. Then Major P. M. Farrington sent me to report to Colonel Duffié for orders, saying that the next time the enemy advanced, they would deploy in the fields and attack his right flank and rear, instead of making another stupid charge along the road. Of my

own knowledge I know nothing more of the fight at this point, but what Major Farrington expected did occur, and a part of his force was captured, but he did not even have a single man wounded, and the ambuscade was a most successful one, inflicting on the enemy a loss of about forty men killed, beside the wounded, and some forty or fifty of their horses were killed.

When I entered the woods, where I expected to find the regiment, I found only one or two stragglers, from whom I learned the direction in which the regiment had gone, and followed, travelling two miles before I could overtake our men and report to Colonel Duffié. The Colonel said: "Stay with the regiment, it is of no use to go back, you will be captured." We went into camp, in the woods, a little more than two miles from the stone wall where we had been fighting dismounted, and remained there until daybreak, under arms and without unsaddling our horses. Just before sunrise a few of the enemy came near us and fired; I think, from the reports of their guns, there might have been six or seven of them; we did not see them and their bullets did no

damage. The order was at once given to mount, and we moved out in column of fours upon a road near by, where we discovered that there was one body of the enemy's cavalry in our front and another in our rear, upon this very road, and a charge from the enemy in our rear forced the regiment to break over a wall and into a wheat field on the left of the road. I waited in the road until the regiment had gone into the wheat field, and then, as my horse was jumping over the wall, my saddle slipped off over his tail and left me on the ground, while the horse followed his comrades at a gallop. I jumped up and started on the run after the regiment, but six of the enemy pursued, and their horses soon overtook me and I was summoned to surrender in the usual form. ("Surrender, you d---d Yankee son of a b---h!") Under the circumstances I was obliged to accept the invitation, and a red-whiskered, red-haired gentleman from South Carolina, kindly took charge of my sabre and started with me for the rear, saying: "I believe your regiment is forming to charge; if there is any prospect of your being re-captured I shall put a bullet through you." I made no answer, but

thought it was pretty rough business. In a few minutes I heard the cheers of the First Rhode Island as they charged; we were then in the woods and I could see nothing, but I knew from the sounds that the charge was a successful one.

After going about an eighth of a mile from the wheat field where I was captured, I saw a force of about five thousand rebel cavalry and thought that my regiment, on that morning not more than two hundred strong, would be annihilated, and to this day it seems wonderful to me that so many as one hundred succeeded in cutting their way into the Union lines. Here I met Captain Edward E. Chase and Lieutenant Charles G. A. Peterson, of my regiment, and felt a little relieved to find company in my misery. We were marched into Middleburg, and on the way passed the stone wall where we were fighting the night before. As near as I could judge, in marching rapidly by, between forty and fifty horses were lying there dead, showing the fatal aim of our men. In Middleburg we saw about forty rebel cavalrymen lying dead on the piazza of the hotel with wreaths of flowers on their breasts. These

men, as we supposed, were killed by us in the fight of the previous evening. As we went along, other officers and enlisted men of my regiment joined the sad column. At night we were placed in a graveyard and the guard paced beats outside the wall ; it was a dark, rainy night, and I thought we could make a dash and escape with little chance of being hit by the random bullets of the sentinels ; but I could not persuade one of the prisoners to go with me and reluctantly gave up the idea. We were given hard bread and bacon for rations, and had as much and as good food as our guards ; another proof that a true soldier never abuses prisoners. We were marched fifteen or twenty miles a day, and on the twenty-second day of June reached Staunton, where we were put into box-cars. The cars had been used for cattle, were filthy, and there were sixty of us put in each car, about as many as could find standing room ; but for all that it was better than marching on foot, a style of travelling specially disliked by a cavalryman. We arrived at Richmond on the morning of June 23, were marched through the streets to Libby Prison, where we were formed in

line and our names and regiments were written down by the clerk; then we were marched into the prison, one at a time, each man being searched as he went in and everything of value taken away. I had about twenty dollars in greenbacks, which I put in my mouth and took into the prison as safely as I would a quid of tobacco. At that time there were about four hundred prisoners in the building, all commissioned officers.

The rations here were hardly sufficient to sustain life, but we found we could write North and have our friends send us provisions in boxes, and Captain Chase, Lieutenant Peterson and myself, of the First Rhode Island, and Lieutenant Higginson, of the First Massachusetts Cavalry, made an arrangement by which each of us had a box from home every Monday morning, and then we lived just as well as we could wish on ham, dried beef, white bread, butter, crackers, condensed milk, coffee, sugar and other articles of food, making a mess of four and sharing with each other. Our boxes were always opened by the rebels, who took what they pleased, but there were many boxes, so the tax on each individual was

light and we did not complain. The father of Lieutenant Higginson was a banker in Boston, Mass., and made arrangements with some bankers in Richmond so that his son could get all the confederate money he wanted, and with this we bought all the fruit, vegetables and tobacco we desired. As we sat at our meals, in these days of abundant food, I noticed that Captain Chase threw away as unfit to eat, the fat part of his slices of ham, and I sometimes said to him: "Chase, you may yet see the time when you would like some of that fat ham," but we could not then know how sadly these idle words would one day come back to us.

Our enlisted men who were prisoners did not fare as well, as I had an opportunity to observe for myself. During the summer of 1863, some enlisted men, who had been confined at Belle Isle, were put in a room under me so that I could see them through a small hole in the floor; they were given some bean soup, and some of the men were so weak that they vomited the beans into the wooden spittoons, and I saw other prisoners pick the beans out of the spit-boxes and eat them, conclusive evidence to my mind

of excessive hunger. The regular routine of prison life has been often given by other writers and I will omit most of it, only observing that our conduct inside of the prison was better calculated in some respects to please ourselves than our guards. There were many good singers among our number, and every night they would sing, "We'll hang Jeff. Davis to a sour apple tree," "We are coming, Father Abraham, three hundred thousand more," "The Star Spangled Banner," and other patriotic war-songs, to the great disgust of Major Turner, the commandant of the prison, but he was never able to stop it, though he threatened all kinds of vengeance. One night when the old song, "John Brown's body lies a mouldering in the grave," had just been given with special enthusiasm, Major Turner made his appearance and said "he had several barrels of powder in the cellar, and if we did not stop that singing he would blow us all to h—l." The Major had scarcely time to get down stairs before the prisoners were roaring out the same old song. The fourth of July, 1863, was a very gloomy day for us. The officers of the prison sent in several Richmond papers con-

taining an account of the first day's battle at Gettysburg. The head-lines ran, "Great Victory at Gettysburg, Pa. ; Forty Thousand Prisoners Captured and the Yankee Army Routed," and it was claimed that the rebel army would soon be in Washington.

The sentinels, pacing their beats outside of the building, had orders to shoot any of the prisoners they could see looking out of the windows, and while I was there three of our officers were killed and one wounded by bullets fired by the guards acting under these orders. But only one man of the four thus hit was aimed at by the soldier, and this officer was a captain who was sitting ten feet from a window in the third story, reading a book, a position in which he could not be seen by the sentinels pacing their beats, but as the new guard marched up to relieve the old guard, they were halted in the street outside the line of sentinels, and one of the soldiers looking up, saw the captain, and raising his gun, stealthily committed this outrageous murder. The commandant of the prison, Major Turner, admitted that the soldier ought not to have shot the captain under the circumstances, but the murderer received

no punishment. The other officers were hit by bullets missing their intended mark and passing through the floor above the window aimed at, thus killing two officers and sending a ball through the arm of another. There was one other shooting affair which, in its final result, was more satisfactory. One day, an officer employed in the kitchen became so interested in looking at something across the James River that, forgetting the strict orders, he stood with his nose pressed against one of the iron bars that served as a substitute for window glass. One of the sentinels took deliberate aim at him and fired; the bullet struck the iron bar in front of the officer's nose, and, separating into two parts, slightly wounded the prisoner in both cheeks. The injured officer marked this sentinel, and that night, soon after dark, he put his arm out between the bars of a third-story window and threw a brick with aim so true that it struck his enemy squarely on the head, stretching him senseless on the ground. The falling musket clanging on the pavement alarmed the other sentinels, and there was at once a loud call for the "Corporal of the Guard," and the wounded soldier

was carried off by his comrades ; but we could never learn how badly he was hurt.

In writing letters, after putting in ink such matters as we were willing the rebel authorities should inspect, we were accustomed to write with lemon juice, which apparently left no trace on the paper, but our friends in the North could warm the letter by the stove and then the words would appear in yellow. This correspondence was ended by a foolish man who wrote a letter thus, and then put in ink the direction : "When you have read this letter once, put it in the oven and bake it and read it again." The rebels baked it and discovered the secret.

Every Friday night we had a negro minstrel entertainment. The troupe was composed of prisoners who came out in character, having their faces blacked with burned cork, and with banjos, violins and other instruments, gave as good entertainments of this kind as I ever witnessed anywhere. The prison officials took an interest in this amusement, furnished materials for costumes, stage curtains and other purposes, and regularly attended on play nights. A newspaper was issued every day in manuscript, and there being only one copy it was read

every morning in each of the three prison rooms. This paper contained all the prison news of the previous day, jokes, witty remarks and general information, and was a very entertaining publication. Among the prisoners there were German and French officers, and large classes were formed for the study of these languages. Many occupied themselves in making out of the beef bones chessmen, small chairs, bedsteads and other articles. About twice a week General Neal Dow, of Maine, delivered a temperance lecture, and had the satisfaction of knowing that he spoke to an audience that could not "go out to see a man." Occasionally we had political and theological public addresses and discussions, and all subjects received earnest and vigorous treatment.

One morning in July or August, 1863, when Dick Turner came up with his guard to call the roll, one officer remained lying on the floor while the others fell into line. Turner ordered him to fall into line; he replied: "I am sick and cannot." Turner then said to one of his guard: "Prick him with your bayonet, I reckon he will get up then." The soldier ran his bayonet into the officer's thigh; the unfortunate man uttered a cry of pain, attempted to rise and fell

back on the floor. There were about three hundred prisoners standing in line, and a yell of rage burst from them as they rushed like madmen on Turner and his guard, who ran for the stairs; but some of them were not quick enough, and were pushed head over heels down the stairs. There was no roll-call that morning.

In August, 1863, there were about fourteen hundred commissioned officers in the prison, and an Italian officer made with a common steel pen a list of all the prisoners and ornamented the borders of the chart with views of Libby Prison, Belle Isle and Castle Thunder. He succeeded in getting this chart safely to the North, where it was lithographed, so that I and many others of the officers who were then prisoners, have a copy of this exquisite specimen of penmanship.

In September, 1863, Colonel A. D. Straight, Fifty-first Indiana Infantry, organized a party of about twenty officers and made preparations for an escape. As there were some traitors who betrayed to the rebel officials all our secret plans and conversations, Colonel Straight saw the necessity for a careful organization, and his party of twenty had

secret signs, grips and passwords. The prison was divided into three parts by two partition walls running from the cellar to the roof, and in the middle room, on the first floor, there was an open fire-place with a pile of ashes on the hearth, though at this time no fire was made in it. They took the ashes out, removed the brick hearth, and then, taking a few stones from the wall that served as a foundation to the brick partition, descended by a rope ladder into the cellar under the hospital, at the south end of the prison, or that part of the building farthest down the river. They then dug down below the foundation wall at that end of the prison, and began to excavate a tunnel. The work was done at night, after the other prisoners were asleep, and towards morning the stones were replaced on the partition wall, the bricks put in their proper places in the fire-place, and the ashes returned to the hearth, so that nothing unusual appeared to attract attention from the rebel officials or the prisoners not in the secret. The working tools were knives, spoons and one old-fashioned, wrought-iron barn-door hinge, which was the best tool they had; I don't know where they

procured it, but suppose it was picked up in the cellar. The excavated dirt was put into one of the prison spittoons, a common wooden box, and thus carried out of the tunnel into the cellar, where it was spread out and concealed under a pile of straw that had been emptied there from the cot beds of the hospital. The work had to be done by one man at a time, lying on his side, and painfully digging through the hard clay in perfect darkness. In the day-time the entrance of the tunnel was covered with straw, so that the rebel officials, who occasionally entered the cellar, did not discover it. This work lasted about six months, and although there were fourteen hundred prisoners, only the working party of twenty knew anything about the tunnel until twenty-four hours before it was used for escape. On the night of the sixth of February, 1864, it was supposed the tunnel was ready for use, and then the other prisoners were informed that there was a plan for the escape of all the prisoners, but were not told how it was to be accomplished. The officers were organized into parties of twenty, with a captain for each company; the companies were num-

bered 1, 2, 3, etc., and the men in each company were also numbered from 1 to 20, with the design that each company and each man in a company should pass through the tunnel in regular order. Captain B. F. Fisher, of the Signal Corps, who was in my mess, and who was one of the faithful twenty, told me of the tunnel on this sixth day of February, and until then I had not dreamed that any such work was in progress. About six o'clock in the evening, or as soon as it was fairly dark, Colonel Straight went down to open the exit of the tunnel, expecting to come out sixty-five feet from the prison wall, with a tight board fence between himself and the line of sentinels, but on making a hole upwards into the air, and putting his head through it to examine the situation, he found himself five feet on the wrong side of the fence, and within about three feet of the sentinels' beat. Luckily, the back of the nearest sentinel was towards the Colonel, and that head went back with great celerity. One of the wooden spittoons was filled with dirt and secured so as to stop this hole, and the work of digging the tunnel beyond the fence was at once resumed. They

worked all that night and most of the next day, fearing all the time that somebody would notice the loose and disturbed earth made by the Colonel in breaking through, but all day long the stupid sentinels paced back and forth, within three feet of the dangerous spot, without noticing anything or suspecting the work going on at their very feet. On the night of February 7, 1864, Colonel Straight again opened the tunnel and found himself in the middle of a horse stall in a shed beyond the fence. He then came back into the prison, and the escape commenced. While doing the work, Colonel Straight had been in his shirt sleeves, but now he put on all his clothing, finishing his equipment with a heavy overcoat, and started to crawl out through his hole in the ground. The tunnel was not large enough for him with the extra clothing on, and about fifteen feet from the entrance he found himself wedged so fast that he could not move either way. Another officer crawled into the tunnel and caught hold of the Colonel's feet, then another took hold of his feet, and thus a chain was formed ending with about fifteen standing up in the cellar and holding on to

each other, and by a careful and strong pull from the whole party the Colonel was liberated, and, coming back into the cellar, he pulled off his outer clothing, and making it up into a bundle, pushed it before him and thus easily passed through the tunnel, followed by the remainder of the party. The captain of each party of twenty stood by the opening in the fire-place until the last man of his command had passed down the rope ladder; he then called the captain of the next higher number,—that is, the captain of squad No. 1 called for the captain of squad No. 2, and so on in regular order, and after the new captain had been shown the way out, the captain of the preceding squad followed his men leaving his successor to pass his men out and turn over his instructions to the next captain. All this talking was done in a whisper and in darkness, as no lights were ever allowed in this room where the fire-place was. The work of escape went on smoothly and rapidly until one hundred and eight had gone down the fire-place, when an alarm was given that Dick Turner was coming, and the captain on duty went down himself, thus making the last man of the escaping party, for

in the darkness none of those left behind could find out the secret route to liberty ; so this false alarm practically closed the tunnel after one hundred and nine had passed through it, although the whole fourteen hundred might have gone out but for this unfortunate breaking up of the organized plan. In going through the tunnel it was kept constantly full, the head of each man coming next to the feet of the one ahead of him. As I came out of the hole I found two lieutenants of an Illinois regiment waiting for me, and we went through an archway to the street next to the canal which ran along the bank of the river. In passing out into the street we went within thirty feet of a sentinel, but he suspected nothing because the men of the guard were accustomed, when off duty, to pass through this archway to break open and rob the boxes sent to prisoners, which were stored in a building near by. One of the escaping officers heard the sentinel say : "I reckon the Yankee boxes are suffering to-night." After reaching the street we went down the river to the next corner, and then turning, went up to Main street and mingled with the citizens, there being at

that hour, about seven o'clock in the evening, many ladies and gentlemen passing on the sidewalks. As we were all dressed in citizens' clothing, received from home in boxes, there was nothing in our costume to excite suspicion. We soon left the main street and started out in the direction of Williamsburg, but our route passed a prison where some of our enlisted men were kept, and I was suddenly surprised by a sentinel bringing his gun to a charge bayonet and ordering me to halt. At first I thought I was re-captured, but one of the Illinois officers behind me called out: "Take the middle of the street," which I at once did without objection from the soldier, whose instructions evidently were, to allow no one to pass the prison on the sidewalk. Just after we reached the outskirts of the city we heard the jingling of sabres, indicating that a small force of cavalry was coming towards us, and jumping over the fence, we ran down to a ravine about one hundred rods from the road, where we suddenly came face to face upon a man who was out to the spring with a lantern getting a pail of water. This peaceful citizen was evidently frightened by our running

towards him in such haste, and in tremulous tones said: "What is the matter; what are you running for?" We replied that we were going to our regiments out at the forts, and passed on without stopping to explain further. The cavalry having passed by towards the city, we returned to the road, and just as I jumped over the fence, four more cavalymen came riding round the corner, and my comrades started back on the run. The enemy were too near for me to think of running, so I stood still, and on coming up, one of the soldiers asked me: "Where are you going?" I replied: "Out to my regiment." Then he said: "What are those other fellows running for?" I gave some reply, exactly what, I do not now recollect, but the idea was, that they were absent from their regiments without permission, and were afraid of being caught by the provost guard. This satisfied the cavalymen and they passed on without further conversation, greatly to my relief, for if they had asked me what regiment I belonged to, where the regiment was stationed, and other details, I should have been in a very dangerous situation. After this last squad of cavalry had gone on

towards the city, my two comrades came back to me, and after going a short distance further along the road we found it necessary to leave it and go across the fields in order to carry out our purpose of reaching Williamsburg. It was a clear night, and we were able to mark out the route by looking at the north star. After going about half a mile we passed a line of rifle-pits between two forts or earthworks, which were about a quarter of a mile apart; near enough, at least, for us to hear the soldiers talking in both forts as we passed. After passing the forts, we came upon a wide belt of felled trees, and had hard work crawling through the tangled branches and over the heavy trunks. After this, we had easy travelling for about two miles, when we came to the Chickahominy, and started to go down the stream in search of a bridge or ford, but after going a short distance I saw a spark of fire, and, on stopping and looking attentively, discovered a rebel picket lying beside a few glowing coals, only twenty feet away. The sentinel had apparently been asleep and was just commencing to rise when we started on the run back to the spot where we first struck the river. The

sentinel did not challenge us or shoot, but threw some fresh fuel on his fire and made it burn brightly, as if trying to discover by the light what had disturbed him. Fearing re-capture, we stripped off our clothing, secured it about our heads and necks, and waded into the river, which was so deep that we had to swim for a rod or two in the middle. The stream was about thirty yards wide and was covered with very thin ice in the shallow places where we waded, so that we had to break the ice as we went along. Our teeth were chattering with cold when we reached the opposite shore, though when we plunged in we were wet with perspiration from our unusual exercise. We dressed rapidly and were about to move on, when I found I had left my haversack with all my rations on the opposite bank. I did not think it prudent to abandon my supplies, and stripping again, I went back across the river and recovered my rations, but paid dearly for them, finding myself thoroughly chilled through on my return. My comrades had waited for me, and taking a north-east course, we pressed on through woods, briars and swamps, frequently falling over logs and into

holes, while the briars and brush tore our clothing into strips, and occasionally drew a little blood. About one o'clock in the morning we heard drums beating, and crawling into a thick bush we listened carefully until we were satisfied that we were near a body of the enemy, and that they were changing their camp-guard. We made a little detour to avoid this force, and then travelled as before until daylight warned us to seek a secure hiding-place. Then, after wading a short distance into a swamp, with the idea of thus throwing the hounds off the scent if any should be put on our track, we found a dry place at the roots of a large pine, where, lying on the south side of the tree, we rested until darkness came again. The night was clear and we kept on our course, with no obstacle except from our old friends the briars and brush, and at daylight found a secure retreat in a thicket of briars on the south side of a hill. I now began to fully realize my mistake in going back across the Chickahominy for my rations; I had thus given myself thrice the exposure of my comrades to the ice-cold water, and had been sick from the very moment of the final landing on

the north side of the stream. This sickness had constantly increased. I had been unable to eat any of the dearly-bought rations, and for the last twenty-four hours had been suffering from frequent attacks of vomiting. All this day I was hot and feverish, and while my companions were peacefully sleeping, I was wide awake and racked with frequent pain. At dark we again went on, but after going a short distance I found I was faint and weak and could not keep up with my comrades; they offered to stay with me until I was better, but I would not listen to it; then one came each side of me, and taking their arms I kept on slowly until about ten o'clock, when I found I could go no farther, and seeing a house with some negro huts around it, I told my comrades to leave me, and I would go to one of the negro huts for the night. They were reluctant to leave me, but I insisted that they should not lose their chance of escape, and they finally went on, and I went to the nearest hut and knocked on the door. An old negro woman came to the door; I told her I was a Yankee, had just got out of Libby Prison and was sick; she told me to come in; I did so, and

asked her if she had any medicine in the house ; she said she had not, and I asked if she had any tea ; she replied that she had nothing but sage. She made for me about two quarts of hot sage tea, which I drank. She also baked a pone of corn bread in the ashes on the hearth and fried some bacon, but I could not eat a mouthful of food. She then brought me a comforter, and rolling myself up in it I laid down before the blazing fire, and after a while had profuse perspiration and went to sleep, resting until morning, when I felt like a new man. Just before daylight the negro woman came down the ladder from the loft where she had slept, woke me up and said I had better be going, as her master might be out before long and he might shoot me. She directed me how to go to Williamsburg by a path through the woods, and I travelled along until I came to a mill-dam, and met the miller coming across the dam with a horse and cart. I asked him some questions about the way to the next court house, and by his directions I turned back and went along the road until I was out of his sight, when I took to the woods, not deeming it safe to go any

further by daylight. I remained hid in the woods all day without anything to eat, and with no appetite to eat if I had been supplied with food. In the afternoon the clouds gathered, and at night it was very dark, so I could not see my way through the woods as I had no stars to guide me, but I started in the direction I knew Williamsburg to be and soon struck a road which had evident marks of the passage of troops, there being frequent tracks, with here and there an old bayonet scabbard. I knew I could not find my way through the woods, and determined to try the road, thinking if there were any rebel pickets they would be on horseback, and that I could see them before they saw me. I had not gone far before I was startled by the command, "Halt!" and discovered a dismounted rebel cavalryman standing behind a tree not five feet away, with his carbine covering me. The following conversation ensued :

Reb.—"Who comes there?"

Yank.—"A friend."

Reb.—"Advance, friend, and give the countersign!"

Yank.—“I have no countersign.”

Reb.—“Who are you?”

Yank.—“I am a citizen and belong up to the Court House.”

Reb.—“It’s no use, I know you.”

Yank.—“Who am I?”

Reb.—“You are one of the Yankees that escaped from Libby Prison.”

Yank.—“How do you know I am a Yankee?”

Reb.—“I know you by the way you talk.”

I saw the hunt was up, and the sentinel called the lieutenant of the guard, who was in a hut near by, and a soldier was detailed to take me down to camp, and he took me a short distance into the woods where there was a small fire burning. My guard gave me a blanket and something to eat; I ate the food, rolled up in the blanket and laid down before the fire. The soldier sat down on a stone near the fire and was evidently very tired, for every few moments he would drop into a doze and then rouse up again, like a man sleeping in church. We were alone there, and I saw an axe lying near me. I thought I could get hold of the axe, strike down my

guard, take his gun and ammunition and start out through the woods. I was just reaching for the axe when I heard the lieutenant and two soldiers coming, and so my plan was knocked in the head instead of the guard. I then gave up the idea of trying to escape and went to sleep. In the morning, the two soldiers who came with the lieutenant, saddled their horses and started with me on the return to Libby, some fifty miles away. As I went along I could see about half a mile away the line of Union mounted cavalry pickets, and felt as never before the sentiment of a song we used to sing in prison, "Thou art so near and yet so far." About seven o'clock in the forenoon one of my guard went to a farm-house for the purpose of getting breakfast for himself and comrade. Soon afterwards I saw this soldier come running on foot and bareheaded into the woods where we were waiting for him. He called his comrade one side and they conversed in whispers a minute, then the mounted soldier drew his pistol, cocked it, and coming up to me, said: "You must run or I shall shoot you." I ran nearly half a mile, and then said: "I can't run any farther, and you can shoot as

quick as you are a mind to." My guard "reckoned we were far enough," and then told me that the Yankee cavalry were at that house and had captured the horse of the soldier who went there. I afterwards learned that my two comrades had got safely into our lines the day before, and having given information about me, the commanding officer had ordered out a scouting party to find me, if possible, and to assist any others who might be in similar circumstances. It was probably fortunate for me that our troops did not discover us in the woods, as in that event I should undoubtedly have been shot by my guard in order to prevent my escape and ensure their safe retreat. I was marched on foot about twenty miles that day, and about five o'clock in the afternoon arrived at a railroad station, where I was put into a car, and before seven o'clock was back in Libby Prison. On my return, all the prison officials seemed to be very angry. Major Turner said to Dick Turner: "Take him down to the cell." Dick said to me: "Take off that overcoat before you go." I said: "What for?" He replied: "Because I tell you to; that's enough;" and I took it off, and he

hung it up in the office. The coat cost me forty dollars, and I never saw it again. Dick Turner undoubtedly stole it for his own use. I was then taken down to the cell, where I found five other officers who had also escaped through the tunnel and been re-captured. Of the one hundred and nine that passed out through the tunnel, sixty-five made good their escape into the lines held by the Union forces, and forty-four were re-captured and returned to Libby. Colonel Straight knew that the rebels would be specially anxious to capture him, as he had excited their anger by commanding an expedition composed of colored troops, and he therefore determined to remain for a time in Richmond, concealed by friends, and instructed his brother officers to announce his safe escape as soon as they reached the Union lines; as a result, it was soon announced in Northern papers and re-printed in Richmond papers that Colonel Straight had safely arrived at Fortress Monroe, while in fact, he was still concealed in the rebel capitol. The rebels then naturally abandoned further efforts for the capture of the gallant Colonel, and, assisted by skillful guides, he safely passed through the hostile lines and joined our army.

There were two other cells near us with officers in them, but we could not tell who they were or why they were there, as we were not allowed to speak to them, and the guard, pacing back and forth before the cells, would not even permit us to look out through the hole cut in the door. The cell was about twelve feet long by eight wide; we had no fire; every night the water froze in our pail, and one small loaf of corn-bread was all that was given each day for six men. It was not half food enough, and we were suffering constantly with hunger and cold. We were thus kept in the cell for three or four weeks to punish us for our escape, and then returned to our old quarters up stairs, which seemed like going to heaven, after our fearful life in the cell.

In April, 1864, four or five hundred of our enlisted men were halted in front of Libby Prison while preparations were being made to march them into a building, and some of us threw pieces of corn-bread out to them, and these men were so feeble that several of them, in stooping to pick up the bread, fell headlong, through excessive weakness,

and were not able to rise without assistance from their comrades.

About the middle of April, 1864, all the prisoners in Libby, numbering then about fifteen hundred commissioned officers, were marched through the city, across a bridge over the James river, loaded into a train of cattle-cars and started for Danville, Va. When we were packing up to leave the prison, orders were issued that each man would be allowed to take nothing but his blankets and a haversack of provisions. There were large supplies of food and crockery of all kinds that had been received in boxes sent us by our friends in the North, and many articles that had been manufactured by the prisoners. We thought these orders had been given so that the rebels might have for their own use the property thus taken away from us, and we determined to disappoint them. The crockery and fancy articles were broken, the provisions were thrown down the vaults and everything we could not take with us was in some manner totally destroyed. My mess of four only had at that time fifteen hams, condensed milk, preserves, canned fruits, jars of pickles, sugar,

coffee, tea and other provisions, all of which went to ruin. The next morning the Richmond papers told the story of this wholesale destruction as another convincing proof of the mean and worthless character of the Yankee vandals. The prisoners had case-knives and files which had been sent them in their boxes from the North, and with the files they soon changed the knives into saws and began to saw holes in the bottom of the cars at each end. The guards, three for each door, making six inside of each car, sat in the open doors, midway of the car, and were prevented by the noise of the moving train and the number of thickly-crowded prisoners from discovering this work. About eight o'clock at night the locomotive stopped to take water, and soon the guards commenced firing from the top of the train at prisoners who were dropping through the holes they had made in the bottoms of the cars, and rushing into the woods each side of the track. I was in the middle of my car and knew nothing about this plan of escape until I heard the guard swearing and firing at the fugitives. No attempt was made to pursue these men, but the train was started as soon as possible,

and it did not stop again until Danville was reached. After we were landed from the train we heard the rebels swearing that the Yankees had cut the cars all to pieces. I never knew how many prisoners escaped that night, or how successful they were in getting into the Union lines.

We remained at Danville about ten days, and were then again put into cattle-cars and taken to Macon, Georgia, where we were kept in a stockade with a fence about eight feet high, enclosing about three acres. The guards had a plank walk laid on the posts outside the fence, and, as they paced their beats, could overlook the whole prison grounds. Ten feet from the fence there were stakes driven into the ground some twenty feet apart, to mark the dead-line, and if a prisoner crossed this line the sentinels would shoot him without mercy or a warning challenge. During the two months I was there, five prisoners were shot dead by the sentinels, and of these, three at least were where they had a right to be, under the prison rules, when they were killed. In the lower part of the stockade a brook ran through, and the part of the stream nearest the

fence was used for washing and other c'eansing purposes, while higher up, water was taken for drinking and cooking. One poor fellow, so weak from disease that he could not walk, was crawling at night on his hands and knees towards the lower part of the stream, when he was shot and instantly killed, ten feet inside the dead-line, by a guard who said he thought the prisoner was intending to get into the brook and thus pass out of the stockade. The water was about eighteen inches deep in the brook and was driven full of stakes where it passed the fence, and no Yankee would ever have dreamed of trying to escape in such a stupid manner.

For shelter, we had an old dwelling-house and some ten or twelve sheds built of rough boards, with the cracks battened. The sheds were each about fifty feet long and sixteen feet wide. There were no floors, but we saved a part of the pine wood given us to cook our rations, and with our jack-knives soon made comfortable bunks for sleeping quarters. Every day we were given a fair quantity of corn-bread, and twice a week we had bacon and black beans, or cow peas. The bacon and beans we

had to cook for ourselves. The bacon was brought in a cart, and as it passed through the camp there was a steady stream of maggots dropping from the cart tail; but we were glad to get even such meat as this.

The rebels were digging a well inside the stockade, and some of the prisoners volunteered to help them, and the work went bravely on, until one night the workmen carelessly left their tools in the bottom of the well, and could not find them next morning. This produced a coolness between the high contracting parties, and the Union forces ceased to co-operate with the confederates. The confiscated tools were used by the prisoners in digging a tunnel, which started in one of the huts and was covered by a bunk during the day-time. The work was done nights, and the excavated earth scattered about the camp in small quantities, so as not to be noticed. This was done so secretly that I, although living in the next shed, knew nothing about it until the work was completed. The tunnel was about eighty feet long, and high enough for a man to crawl through on his hands and knees, and the prisoners were only

waiting for a dark night to open the end beyond the stockade and escape, when a stray cow happened to break through into the tunnel just outside the fence, and thus brought all their plans to naught. A thorough search of the camp by the rebels, resulted in the discovery of another tunnel, some fifty feet long, needing but little more work to make it effective. A squad of negroes was set to work filling up these tunnels, which was done by digging so that the top fell into them; but no punishment was given to any of the prisoners for this effort to escape.

In June, 1864, after having been in this stockade two months, six hundred of the fifteen hundred commissioned officers present, were selected for the purpose of being put under the fire of the Union guns, at Charleston; a measure which the confederates hoped would stop the steady rain of shot and shell on that doomed city. We were loaded into cattle-cars and started about ten o'clock in the forenoon, with a heavy guard of six soldiers inside and fifteen on the top of each car. A dark and cloudy night found us still on our journey, and about three o'clock in the morning, as I was standing right behind the

guard sitting in the open door of our car, a lieutenant of the Sixth United States Cavalry, whose name I do not now remember, whispered to me: "Jim, if you will jump out there, I will follow you." I jumped at once; I could not tell whether my head or feet struck first, but the train was on an embankment fifteen or twenty feet high, and I rolled over and over into the ditch at the bottom. The guard fired at me, both those in the car and on top, fifteen or twenty bullets, but they could take no aim in the darkness and wasted their ammunition. When at last I came to a full stop, I found I was not injured at all, but was well covered with dirt, and climbing up the embankment, I sat down on the rail to pick the dirt out of my eyes, nose and ears, and wait for my comrade. Suddenly I discovered within ten feet of me a rebel soldier, fully armed; I thought he was a picket, and I was re-captured. I said: "Who are you?" He replied: "I am one of the guard. I know who you are. You are one of the prisoners that jumped off the train. I want nothing to do with you because I am hurt." I asked him how he got hurt, and he replied: "Some of you uns pushed me

off the train." Then he went on, thus taking quite a load off my mind. In a few minutes the lieutenant joined me; his experience had been the same as mine, except that having waited a minute or two after my departure before taking his jump, the guards did not fire at him, not having had time to re-load their pieces. At the time we made this jump, the train was going about fifteen miles an hour; I had not thought of jumping until the lieutenant suggested it to me; if I had stopped to think, I should never have done it; and even now, as I recall the adventure, it seems remarkable that we should have escaped without serious injuries. We knew we were in South Carolina, not far from the coast held by the Union troops, and our first plan was to follow the railroad to the bridge across the Pocotaligo river, and then go down the river to the coast. We started in that direction, but upon thinking the matter over, we came to the conclusion that this bridge would be guarded, and we re-captured, and leaving the railroad, we travelled due east, marking out our course by the north star, until daybreak, when we went to sleep under a large oak tree. I woke up

about eight o'clock in the forenoon, and, on looking at the lieutenant, saw that his face was fairly black with mosquitoes, but he was too tired to notice them. I roused my comrade and we again pressed forward, but had not gone far before I heard the baying of hounds, and knew we were pursued. We tried to throw the dogs off the scent by wading some distance in a brook, and crossing and re-crossing it, but this plan did not delay the dogs at all; they were evidently used to it; on coming to the point where we took to the water the dogs would separate, some running along each side of the brook, and thus find our trail again where we left the stream. We travelled about three hours, with the dogs gaining on us all the time, and then decided that we could not escape, and climbing into a live-oak, waited for the dogs to come up. In a few minutes the dogs reached us, and with them were two rebel cavalrymen, fully armed. Each soldier had a blood-hound secured by a cord fastened to the pommel of his saddle, and about a dozen fox-hounds with their noses to the ground were following our tracks. One of the soldiers looked up and said :

"What are you doing up thar?" We replied: "We got up here to get out of the way of the dogs," and he said: "Well, come down, we know who you are," and we came down, and after travelling about a mile, we came to the camp of a confederate brigade. We were taken to the tent of the general in command, who, after a few questions, ordered us to be taken to the railroad station, and at four o'clock that afternoon we rejoined our comrades in the Charleston jail-yard.

We were quartered here in large wall-tents, about fifteen in a tent; but being nearly destitute of clothing, the prisoners cut up all these tents and made pantaloons of them, preferring to sleep in the open air rather than go naked. Our rations here were very good indeed, consisting of rice, beef, sweet potatoes, wheat bread and other articles, and we had enough of wholesome food. We remained in the jail-yard about two weeks and were then put into Roper Hospital, only a short distance away, where we remained about a month. During these six weeks, we were under fire, but, though the shells were falling all around, only once did one come very

near, and that burst in the air over the hospital, and a piece weighing one hundred pounds struck the roof and went through to the cellar, making a slight scratch on the arm of one of our party. The officer hit was sitting with his arm resting on a table through which the iron crashed, and he alone was touched, although there were six hundred prisoners in the building. Every night it was my custom to go upon the roof of the hospital to watch the huge shells that seemed to rise out of the sea, with blazing fuses marking their curved flight through the air, as they came whizzing from the Union guns, five or six miles away.

After we had been in Charleston about six weeks, yellow fever made its appearance, and eight or ten officers were taken to the hospital sick with this disease, several cases proving fatal. The enemy, fearing the disease would spread over the city, put us into box-cars and sent us to Columbia, where we were put into camp on high land, about two miles from the city. There was no fence or stockade here, nothing but a line of sentinels about ten feet apart; and there was no shelter whatever for the

prisoners. For rations, all we had was corn meal and sorghum molasses, and only about half enough of that. There were six hundred prisoners, and we had no cooking utensils; and yet corn meal was given, which we had to eat raw, as some did, or invent some way of cooking it. My mess consisted of three—Captain Edward E. Chase, Lieutenant C. G. A. Peterson and myself, all of the First Rhode Island Cavalry. We found a piece of roofing-tin covered with rust, scoured it as best we could, built a little fire-place of stones and put the tin on top. We mixed our corn meal with water and sorghum molasses and baked the mixture in a thick cake on the tin plate, which we sprinkled with salt to keep the cake from sticking, as we had no grease to use for that purpose. We were given a little wood to cook with, but we were hungry all the time and felt that we did not have more than half enough to eat.

One night a sentinel fired at a prisoner who was inside the dead-line and where he had a right to be, but the guard asserted that he thought the prisoner was intending to run the guard. The man aimed at escaped unharmed, but another prisoner, quietly sit-

ting on the ground, received the bullet in his breast and died in a few hours.

Two fox-hounds, kept by the rebels for tracking negroes or escaped prisoners, came into the prison one day and were killed and eaten. A few days afterwards, a large hog came in, which met with the same fate as the dogs, and I was lucky enough to get a piece of the hog, but did not get a chance to try the dog-meat. The guards missed these animals, but the slaughter was so secretly and quietly done that they did not suspect the prisoners.

About the first of November, there was a storm which left the ground covered with about six inches of snow. This caused fearful suffering, and we held a mass meeting and sent a committee, composed of generals and colonels, to see the major commanding the prison. This committee told the major that we must have wood for fires, or we should break through the guard at any cost of life, as we thought death by bullets better than freezing to death. The major said he had no men to cut wood for us, but that he would allow one or two squads of twenty to go out of the prison to cut wood for the others, if

the prisoners thus going out would give their parole not to escape. The major sent to Columbia and procured axes, which were distributed among two squads of twenty each, who were paroled and allowed to go out without any guards, to cut wood. This party felled a large quantity of wood and brought it near the guard-line, at a point opposite the house of the commandant of the prison, to whom they reported and asked permission to bring the fuel across the guard-line. The sentinels were ordered to allow the prisoners to cross the line to bring in the wood, and soon there were prisoners going backwards and forwards from the camp to the wood-pile, and others bringing wood out of the forest, ten rods away, to the pile near the guard-line.

The wind was northwest and very cold, which seemed to increase the natural stupidity of the sentinels, and I soon discovered that more Yankees were going into the woods than there were coming out. Chase and myself talked the matter over and concluded to try to escape. We went across the line to the wood-pile, ostensibly to bring in wood; I brought one stick into camp and then went into the

forest, as though going to bring in wood from the chopping party, where I waited until Captain Chase joined me. About half the prisoners, some three hundred, escaped in this way; but not one of the paroled officers failed to keep the pledge given that they would not escape.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon of November ninth, as we started on a northwest course through the woods, being guided by keeping the wind, which was from that direction, blowing full in our faces. We had gone but a short distance, when we met another escaped prisoner, Lieutenant Hefflefinger, who said he was alone and would like company, so we went on together. After sunset it was very dark, but we pushed on, intending to cross the Santee river at a certain ferry that night. About one o'clock in the morning, we found the ferry and saw the boat used for crossing, but we were so cold that we made a fire and stood about it until we got warm, before waking up the ferryman. There were three or four houses, and after we were warmed we spent some time in looking about the different buildings and deciding in which one the

negro ferryman lived. Finally, we made our guess, and it proved to be a good one. The negro came out and put us across; we told him who we were and that we had no money to pay him, but he seemed glad of the chance to serve us. He told us that a white man lived in one of the houses at the ferry, and we were glad we had not waked the wrong man.

After crossing the ferry we kept on until daylight, when we were, as we thought, twenty miles from our prison. As the sun rose, we hid in the woods, and sent Hefflefinger to hunt for a breakfast for the party. About eight o'clock the lieutenant returned with five or six negro women, three or four negro men and about ten children, all eager to see the Yankees. Our visitors brought us roast chicken, boiled eggs, corn-bread and milk, and we had a glorious breakfast that Sunday morning. After eating till we could hold no more, we went to sleep for the remainder of the day, while the negroes stood guard for us. About dark we ate another good meal, and had some food left to take with us. Then we took the road leading to Greenville and travelled all

night, making about fifteen miles. At sunrise we went into the woods, made a little fire, cooked some sweet potatoes our negro friends had given us, and then laid down and slept until sunset. Thus we kept on, travelling nights and sleeping days.

One night we had nothing to eat, and in a corn-field that had been harvested we found a pumpkin and two or three ears of corn; we cut the pumpkin into strips and roasted it over the coals; we also roasted the corn by putting the ears on the coals, and thus prepared something we called supper. Another night we heard a negro calling his cows, and went to him and asked for something to eat; he said he would do the best he could for us. He was a single man and lived with his master, so he could not get any provisions, but he took us into his cabin and left us by the fire while he went into his master's garden and dug some sweet potatoes for us. We cooked by his fire enough potatoes for supper, and then our colored friend went with us, carrying half a bushel of the sweet potatoes until about midnight, going as far as he could go and get back to his master before daylight. The next night we found

another negro man calling his cows, and told him we wanted something to eat. He took us into the woods near his cabin, and three negro women and several children came out to see us. One of these negro women asked us where our horns were, she said her massa said the Yankees had horns. Our visitors brought us milk, corn-bread and bacon, and we had all we could eat. But for the negroes, we must have starved to death; they always received us kindly and did all they could for us, giving us food, guides and all the assistance in their power.

The negroes told us about an Union white man living about ten miles beyond Greenville, and, after eating the food they gave us, we took the road, and about three o'clock in the morning, passed through Greenville, a little village of about three hundred population, built on each side of the main road; a town thus having only one street. As we went along, the dogs barked furiously, but we saw no human being; everybody was evidently asleep. After passing Greenville we did not stop at daylight, as usual, but leaving the road, went on through the woods to find the Union white man, as directed by

the negroes. About ten o'clock in the forenoon we found him, a fine-looking man, with full beard, about forty years of age, and he was the most ignorant man I ever met, black or white. He had never been to Greenville, ten miles away; he had never been five miles from the log cabin in which he was born; he was willing to help us, but he was too ignorant to be of any use, we could do better with the negroes. He gave us a little corn-bread to eat, all he had, and we stopped in his hut until night, when we went on through a pass in the mountains to the house of another Union white man, being guided in our movements by information received from the negroes before passing Greenville. We found this man about sunrise; he was nearly seventy years of age; he had sons in both the Union and rebel armies, and was very intelligent. He took us into his house and gave us an excellent breakfast, and then, telling us it would not be safe for us to remain with him, as he lived on the main road through the mountains, sent his boy, twelve years of age, to guide us to the house of another Union white man, about three miles away from the main road. We

were now in the mountains of North Carolina, and found our new host to be a shoemaker, with two sons at home, deserters from the rebel army. The rebels were frequently sending raiding parties into these mountains to arrest deserters, and a picket was kept out from this house all the time to give warning of the approach of the enemy. In the day-time one of the women stood guard, and at night one of the men. Rebel soldiers had come several times to arrest these deserters, but had been unable to find them.

We remained here three days, resting while the shoemaker mended our boots, and the women our clothing. In the day-time we went to a cave about half a mile from the house and at dark returned to the cabin. There was a rebel cattle-pen about three miles away, and the second night we were there we visited it and captured a steer while the old man in charge was asleep. We put a rope around the horns of the beast and led him quietly about a mile and a half to a ravine in the mountains, where we slaughtered him and carried the four quarters back to our hiding-place. After being here three days, we were

told that another party of escaped prisoners were at the house of a wealthy Union man, about four miles away, and one of the rebel deserters guided us there, where we found eleven other officers who had been with us at Columbia. Here we remained a week, the weather continuing rainy and unfavorable for travel. Our host killed a sheep for us every day, and we lived on mutton and corn-bread. At daybreak we went to a cave; at night we came back to the house, put one man out as picket on the road while the others laid down on the kitchen floor and slept in front of a fire burning on the hearth. The Union sentiment was strong in this locality, and two regiments of cavalry were organized in our army from men out of these mountains.

The distance across the mountains into East Tennessee was seventy-five miles, through dense thickets and forests with nothing but Indian trails for a path. We found a white man who had been across to Knoxville several times, and he agreed to guide us to that place, and on our safe arrival, we were to pay him five hundred dollars in greenbacks. Our host killed several sheep, and gave us mutton and

corn-bread enough to have carried us through, if our guide had not made delay by losing his way. We felt very grateful to our generous host and gave him everything we had of value, consisting, as I now recollect, of a silver watch and a jack-knife. We also took his name and post office address, intending to reward him when the war was over, but the paper on which I wrote down these facts was destroyed during my prison life, and I have forgotten the name.

About the first of December we started, and in an hour or two, commenced ascending the mountains, which we found covered with six inches of snow. Here, we could travel only in the day-time; at night we scraped away the snow from a patch of ground, made a fire from the dead wood, which was abundant, and slept on the windward side of the blaze. The mountains abounded in panthers, wild-cats, bears and deer, and every night we could hear the panthers screaming about our camp. We saw deer, frequently; and one day, as we turned a sharp corner, met six deer coming towards us and not a hundred feet away; but they left the path free for us, in haste. We frequently saw the tracks and

other signs of bears, but did not get sight of any, and it mattered little to us how abundant the game was, as we had no gun in the party.

After four days of this travelling, the guide said that, owing to the snow altering the appearance of his land-marks, he had lost his way, and got too far to the south. In trying to find our way, we got into a swamp, where the balsam trees, horse briars and high laurel made such a tangled mass that the clothing was nearly all torn off of us. We were struggling in this swamp nearly all day, and did not travel much over a mile. On the afternoon of this day, Captain Chase had a fainting spell from hunger and exhaustion, and, sitting down on a log, said to me: "Jim, I wish I had some of that fat ham, now " He then said: "It is of no use, I can't go any farther; I must stay here and die; go ahead and leave me." I told him I should stay with him as long as he lived, and went and got him some water, gave him a drink and bathed his head, and after a time he felt better; and then, by following the tracks in the snow, we found our comrades again.

Just at night we came to a brook running through

the swamp, and getting into it, waded down the stream. The water was icy cold, the rocks covered with ice, and we found frequent falls of ten or twelve feet, which made our travel very difficult. When it was too dark to go further, we were still in the swamp, and, leaving the water, we cleared away a little place on the bank for a camp. We were wet nearly all over with the ice-cold water; it rained all night, and we could not make any fire, although we tried to start one for two hours, but everything was too wet to burn. We had nothing left to eat, and had been at least twenty-four hours without food. It was a night of intense suffering; I thought I should freeze to death. The next morning the rain had stopped falling, and we took again the bed of the stream and travelled thus until about four o'clock in the afternoon, when we came out of the swamp into a heavy oak wood with no underbrush. We then went up to the top of the mountain for the purpose of seeing where we were and marking out our course. We reached the top of the mountain about dark, and making a fire, lay down and slept all night. As I was sitting by the blaze, nodding in

sleep, my hat fell into the fire and I was left bare-headed.

The next morning greeted us with bright sunshine, without a breath of wind; but the appearance of our party was in strong contrast to the beauty of the weather. In the swamp our clothing had been nearly all torn off; the rocks in the stream had ruined our old boots; some had nothing but rags to protect their feet from the snow. The heels and upper leather of my boots remained, but the soles were gone, and at each step my bare feet struck the snow. Having been without food for more than two days, we again started on our way, and after going a quarter of a mile, saw, about four miles away, down in the valley, a column of smoke, rising straight up into the air. We halted and held a consultation. Twelve of us decided to go to the house indicated by the smoke, capture the owner, take what he had to eat, and then take him with us as a prisoner until near our lines, when we would turn him loose. The other two said, rather than take the risk of capture, they would push on and take the chances of starvation. They went on, and,

as we afterwards learned, in a couple of hours crossed into Tennessee, where they found Union white men, had food and clothing in abundance, and soon joined our army at Knoxville.

As we were lying asleep in the morning around the fire on top of the mountain, two Indians who were out hunting had discovered us, and, returning to the very house we were aiming for, had told the white man living there about Yankees being on the mountain, and he had gone about four miles away, to a rebel picket-station, and was returning with a white sergeant and about twenty Indian soldiers, when we met at the house and were surrounded by the enemy before we discovered them. They were only fifty feet away when we saw them, and the white sergeant called upon us to surrender, and asked who we were. Just then, a white boy, about fourteen years old, came out of the house with a musket in his hand, and, walking up within six feet of one of the lieutenants of our party, fired at his head, the bullet striking his hat and knocking it off. The boy was very angry at missing his aim, and commenced loading his gun again, swearing, mean-

while, that he would kill every d—d Yankee. The father and the guard looked on without making any effort to interfere, but the mother came to the door and said to her husband: "Don't you let the boy kill any of them Yankees, I don't want them laying around here stinking." The boy finished loading his gun, and then came forward with the evident intention of shooting me. I caught the gun by the barrel and held it off one side, sheltering my body behind a tree, and then his father interfered and took the gun away from the boy. The owner of the house wished us taken to the rebel picket post at once, but we told him we could go no further without something to eat, as we had been without food for nearly three days, so he told his wife to cook us something to eat. The woman went into the garden, cut some cabbage and put it on to boil, mixed up some corn-bread, put that in the oven, and fried some dried bear-meat which was about as easy to chew as raw-hide. The old man was in such a hurry to get us off that we had to eat the cabbage and corn-bread before they were half cooked. Then we were marched nearly four miles and put into an old

camp-meeting shed, where we remained about ten days, and several of the party were very sick from eating the raw bread and cabbage. While in this old building we had the same rations as our guard. The first night after our re-capture our guide made a dash for liberty; the guards fired at him and missed, but the Indians at once turned out and searched the woods until they found him. This seemed to take all the life out of the unfortunate man, and he would not try again, though we urged him to do so, knowing he would be shot if he did not escape.

We were marched about ninety miles to a railroad station at Ashville. The order of march was by file, first a prisoner then an Indian soldier, then another prisoner followed by a soldier, each being responsible for his man. We were kept at Ashville four or five days, during which time our guide was taken out and shot for the crime of having tried to assist us to escape. There were four members of the masonic fraternity among our number, who were furnished with a complete outfit of new clothing and all the food they needed, by their brethren in Ash-

ville, who frequently took them out of the prison to dine with them at their homes. Not being one of the fortunate ones I received no such aid and comfort. We were put on a train here and taken to Salisbury, N. C., where we remained one night, and then to Danville, Va., which we reached about Christmas.

We were re-captured December 7, 1864, after having been twenty-eight days en route to the Union lines, and all our hardship and suffering had been lost for want of only two hours more of endurance. At Danville I found General Duffié, our old colonel, and the first words he said, were, "Fale, I want to get out of this," and we had many talks and planned different ways of escape. There were about six hundred prisoners at Danville, all commissioned officers, whose treatment was more severe than I endured elsewhere during my captivity, and the rations issued for food were the worst. We were confined in a three-story building formerly used as a tobacco warehouse, and the sash had been taken from the windows on all the floors, so that the cold winds of winter blew freely through. The prisoners were

kept on the second and third floors, and when they laid down to sleep, the wind came through the floors so freely as to make it seem as though we were lying on ice. A piece of corn-bread, about the size of one-third of an ordinary brick, was issued to each man every morning, which was all the food allowed for twenty-four hours. During the two months I was there, no meat of any kind was issued, and only once a few beans, of which I received half a pint, and, after eating them, discovered in the bottom of the cup, eight pieces of rat offal, which so disgusted me that I have eaten no bean soup from that day to this. I had often seen men suffering for want of food, but here, for the first time, I saw a strong man cry with hunger. He was an infantry captain, six feet high and of powerful form; he had been a prisoner only about four weeks, and had not, like his fellow-sufferers, become hardened by calamity. It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, he had eaten all the food given him for twenty-four hours and could expect nothing more until the next morning, and sitting down on the floor, he cried like a baby. No one taunted the sufferer, who weighed

about one hundred and eighty pounds, and needed more food than some of the lighter weights. My treatment at Danville injured my health more than all my other hardships as a prisoner, and from its effects I have not recovered, and do not expect to fully recover.

February 16, 1865, all the prisoners at Danville, over three hundred in number—two hundred having been forwarded a few days before—were taken in box-cars to Richmond and put in our old quarters at Libby. On the morning of February 22d, we were marched a short distance to a rebel steamer on which we started down the river under a flag of truce. It was cold on the river, and I obtained permission to lie down in a warm place on the coal in the fire-room, where I slept until waked up by the fireman on the arrival of the steamer at its destination. About noon we were landed near Butler's Dutch Gap Canal, and, marching a short distance, came in sight of our flag-of-truce steamer, with the grand old flag streaming in the breeze. As we reached the river bank, a brass band on the hurricane-deck of the steamer, struck up with "Home, Sweet Home,"

and the effect was wonderful ; some of the prisoners shouted like lunatics ; some cried, some laughed, some lay down and rolled over and over in the dirt. On board our boat, hot coffee, white bread and cold meat were served in abundance, and in all my life I never enjoyed so luxurious a meal. The released prisoners were eating, talking, laughing and running around the boat like wild animals just let out of a cage ; it seemed impossible for them to keep still. Among the enlisted men who were exchanged with me, I saw four or five who had become helpless idiots from their suffering. We reached Annapolis, Maryland, the morning of February 23d ; but six of our comrades had died on the passage. A friend of mine, who saw us as we marched off the boat on our arrival, told me afterwards that we "looked like an army of dead men, we were so thin and had such pale faces."

I was a prisoner only one year, eight months and four days ; but in the sixteen years that have passed away since my release, I have been a constant sufferer from diseases caused by the hardships of prison life ; yet never, in the darkest hours of pain and

despair, have I for an instant regretted that, in war time, I wore the uniform and discharged as best I could, the duties of a soldier in the defence of our common country.

